

The Student Right to Know Before You Go Act

Introduced by Sen. Ron Wyden

Higher education is the ticket to success, and our nation's future depends on our institutions of higher education. Students have a right to know how long it will take them to complete their education, what their likelihood of completion is, how far that education will take them after graduation, and at what cost. They deserve to know this information **before** they invest thousands of dollars and years of their lives. This proposal would ensure future students and their families can make well-informed decisions by having access to information on:

1. Post-graduation average annual earnings;
2. Rates of remedial enrollment, credit accumulation, and graduation;
3. Average cost (both before and after financial aid) of the program and average debt accumulated;
4. The effects of remedial education and financial aid on credential attainment and a greater understanding of what student success can mean.

Current reporting requirements for institutions of higher education make it difficult to identify which critical bends in the education system tend to improve or worsen student outcomes and make it impossible to match student records to results such as employment and earnings data. Currently, institutions of higher education that receive federal funding are required to report various data sets to the U.S. Department of Education (USED) under the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). However, many critical IPEDS reporting requirements are cohort-based and submitted as aggregates, making it difficult to attain reliable information on a number of relevant policies (such as graduation rates of transfer students). This proposal would:

1. Replace existing IPEDS reporting requirements with a state-based and individual-level system which excludes any personally-identifiable data;
2. Require these new interoperable data systems to match individual level transcript data to post-graduation employment and earnings outcomes;
3. Reduce institutional reporting burden for institutions that report to both IPEDS and state data systems;
4. Further empower state data systems, making current federal Statewide Longitudinal Data System (SLDS) investments an even better value;
5. Create a data system with tremendous potential for policy analysis, research, and reporting, that contains no personally-identifiable data.

Importantly, under such a system, these data would be disaggregated and available based on educational program, educational institution, and employment sector. Rather than relying upon a mid-20th century system of institutional reporting, this type of system would make it possible for states, other authorized entities, and USED to share data with each other, while protecting student privacy. The states have built student level data systems and Congress, through USED, has spent roughly a half a billion dollars funding their construction through the SLDS grants. This bill creates an opportunity for states to carry the responsibility of reporting, lifting it from individual institutions. This will reduce error in reporting, promote the integration of education and training data systems, and it will ensure that we have an appropriate return on our federal investment in state data systems and in higher education in general.